

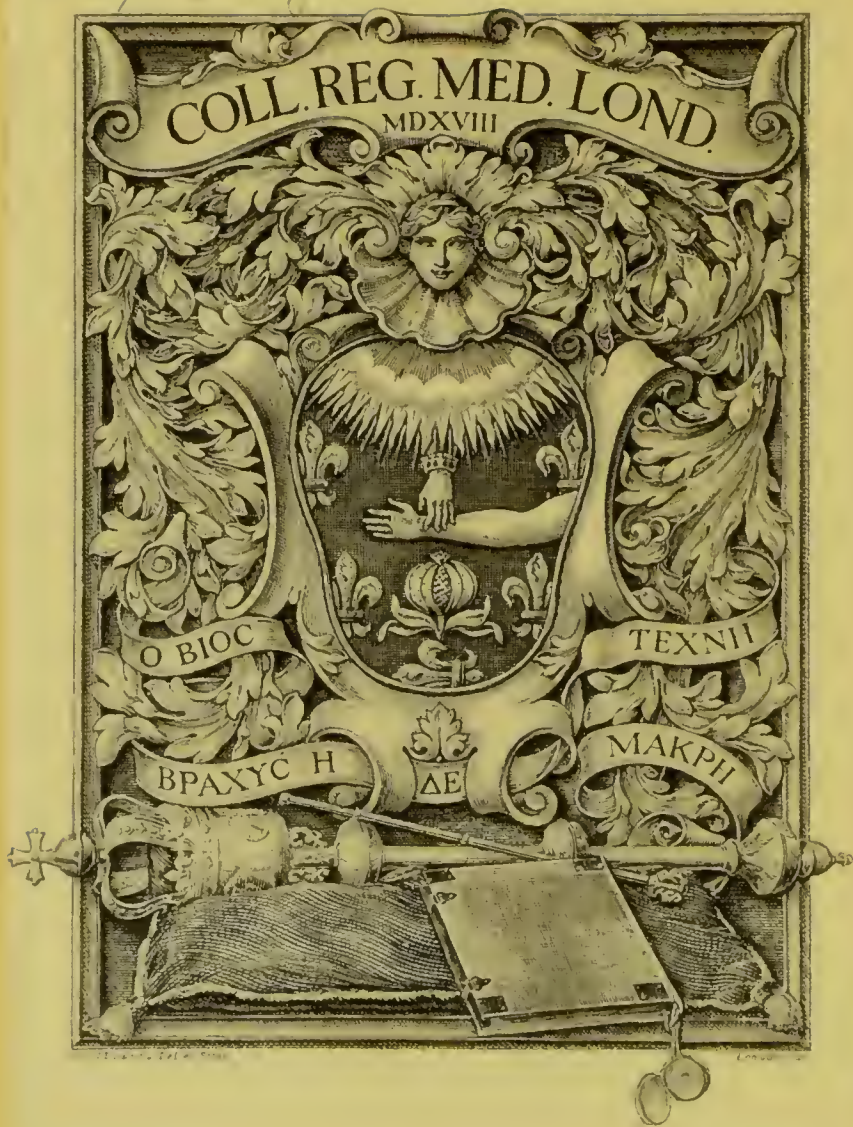
A. Thomson Crabbe, F. R. C. S. E.

MEDICAL  
MISSIONARY

ANNIE R. BUTLER.

SL/24-1-g-10

92 CRA




My dear Cousins both  
Please excuse this  
torn  $\frac{1}{2}$  sheet. Our  
Father has been  
splendidly well of late  
- mind & body ~~both~~. He  
seems to-day to have a  
slight cold, but I trust  
it will pass off.

The war notwithstanding?  
(Though we have eaten,  
breathed, lived war of  
late) - the fact remains  
that we had a very  
happy Xmas! My brother  
Thomas's whole household  
~~were here~~  
of two of the med. w. students.  
I am sure your babies enjoyed  
the day! affects w. cousin Annie



W. THOMSON CRABBE, F.R.C.S.E.,  
MEDICAL MISSIONARY.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2016

<https://archive.org/details/b28034478>





Faithfully yours  
W. Thompson Crutcher

# W. THOMSON CRABBE

F.R.C.S.E.

## MEDICAL MISSIONARY

BY

ANNIE R. BUTLER

*Author of*

"GLIMPSES OF MAORI LAND," "STORIES FROM GENESIS," "THE  
PROMISED KING," "LITTLE KATHLEEN," ETC.

LONDON

S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO.

8 & 9 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1899.

SL

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS LIBRARY	
CLASS	92 CRA
ACCN.	44297
SOURCE	C R. Johnson £25.00
DATE	27 November 1986

# CONTENTS.



CHAP.	PAGE
I.—“THE DOCTOR, HE’S SO KIND” . . .	7
II.—EARLY DAYS . . . . .	10
III.—ABERDEEN . . . . .	20
IV.—EDINBURGH TO BIRMINGHAM . . .	27
V.—THE YEAR OF GRACE . . . . .	35
VI.—CONSULTING ROOM WORK . . . .	41
VII.—TWO HOURS WITH THE DOCTOR . .	47
VIII.—RELATION TO THE CHURCHES . . .	59
IX.—EXTENSION . . . . .	64
X.—LAST YEARS AND DAYS . . . . .	73



W. THOMSON CRABBE, F.R.C.S.E.,  
MEDICAL MISSIONARY.

---

I.

“THE DOCTOR, HE’S SO KIND!”

“He did kind things so kindly,  
It seemed his heart’s delight  
To make poor people happy,  
From morning until night.

“He always seemed at leisure  
For everyone who came;  
However tired or busy,  
They found him just the same.”

“THE doctor, he’s so kind! He puts his hand on my shoulder, and calls me ‘*George*.’”

These words, spoken years ago in the slow, shy fashion of a big working man who has

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

been strongly moved, gives perhaps the best portrait of W. Thomson Crabbe that a few words could possibly give.

“The doctor, he’s so kind!” By how many thousands of the poor in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Birmingham, has that refrain been taken up during the thirty years of Dr. Crabbe’s wonderful ministry. “Tell me,” one asks, “wherein the secret of his great strength lay?” And an answer comes to us in one of his own early utterances—

“It is to be accounted for in great measure by the fact that the poor are peculiarly susceptible to kindness.”

While a yet fuller answer comes back to us from a poor woman who spoke to the doctor of her changed prospects for time and eternity, and added, “It’s all through your kindness and teaching.”

Yes, “the loving kindness of the Lord” was the facet of the many-sided Christ character on which Dr. Crabbe most loved

## Medical Missionary.

to dwell; and the light which streamed therefrom to him was reflected on every weary soul and body that crossed his pathway.

# W. Thomson Crabbe,

## II.

### EARLY DAYS.

“ How can I, Lord, withhold  
Life's brightest hour  
From Thee, or gathered gold,  
Or any power ?

Why should I keep one precious thing from Thee,  
When Thou hast given Thine own dear self for me ? ”

WILLIAM THOMSON CRABBE was born April 9th, 1844, at Kirriemuir, Scotland, a place familiar to the British reading public as “ Thrums.” He was the fourth of seven children. His father was a tradesman, and his uncle a Free Church minister of the place, while his mother had a wonderful influence over him for good, earning from her boy the warm affection and respect which never failed throughout the fifty years that God spared them to each other.

## Medical Missionary.

When old enough, William was sent to one of the schools in the neighbourhood,<sup>1</sup> where, according to Scotch fashion, rich and poor, high and low, met together, all receiving the same thorough grounding which has been to so many a Scotch lad of narrow means a stepping-stone to higher things. An elder brother of J. M. Barrie's was one of his schoolfellows.

What Dr. Crabbe was like as a schoolboy could in later life be guessed when he chanced across a friend of that Kirriemuir period. He would simply run over with fun and laughter, and with chaff and repartee in the broadest of Scotch, till the gravest would catch the infection and join in. One can guess what a favourite the dark-haired, curly-headed laddie would be with both masters and boys, with his quick, clever, original speeches and ways, his abounding vitality and his sunny good humour and kindliness.

But his mother desired more than this for

<sup>1</sup> The North Free Church Day Schools apparently.

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

her son. At his birth she had dedicated him to the Lord, and for years she had met weekly in the vestry with one or two other mothers to pray for the conversion of her children; and now, just about the close of his schooldays, an answer came. It was 1859, the time of revival through England, Ireland, and Scotland, that William gave himself to the Lord. His uncle the minister, who had always been the chief evangelist of the Kirrie district, went to Ireland that year, and came back greatly refreshed by what he had seen and heard of the revival work; and it seems probable that his nephew was one of the fruits of that visit. In any case, from that time the boy seems to have had no doubt whose he was and whom he served, and his old school friends were not allowed any doubt on the matter either. He joined a boys' prayer meeting held at a private house, and here, for probably the first time in his life, his voice was heard aloud in prayer.

Meanwhile, he was helping his father at

## Medical Missionary.

home ; but his eyes began to trouble him and his health to show signs of failure, and it was thought well that he should get a year of thorough open-air country change. So the summer of 1860 found him, still full of fun and energy, taking an active part in all the work of a farm, and little dreaming of the results that the next few weeks were to have on all his future life and work.

In the good providence of God, the Rev. John Sandison, Free Church minister of Arbroath, came that summer with his family to the farm for their usual yearly holiday ; and the worthy minister, as his custom was, invited all of the farmer's household who could spare the time to come in daily for family worship. Amongst the others came William Thomson Crabbe, whose rich clear voice soon attracted the attention of the newcomers, and earned for him the title of "the singing boy." But little did Mr. Sandison dream that the sweet face of his young daughter, Emilia, was meanwhile

W. Thomson Crabbe,

awakening romantic affections and latent ambitions in the heart of that singing boy which would soon overleap every barrier and take no denial until they were satisfied.

But so it was. And now the lad's whole energy was bent on the attainment of his object. Towards this he felt the first step to be College. Now College without money is not usually thought of, and money was not plentiful in the Kirriemuir household. But love, like faith,

“Laughs at impossibilities,  
And cries ‘It shall be done’;”

and to William's brave, purposeful spirit the needed money was a mere matter of detail.

A short space of time found him settled in Edinburgh, his mother's consent to the move having doubtless been greatly helped by the fact of her boy's recent decision for Christ, and by the appointment the previous year of her brother, W. Burns Thomson, as

## Medical Missionary.

Superintendent of the Cowgate Mission Dispensary. The lad would not be alone in the great city.

Arrived in Edinburgh, William Crabbe quickly found a situation in a chemist's shop, and soon became known as "the little student." Faithful and diligent as he was in his employer's service, the main object of his stay in Edinburgh was never out of his mind. Did he have to wait for medicines, or for a customer, out in a moment would come the book he always carried in his pocket. In his college classes it was the same; step by step he won his way; winning the love, too, and respect of classmates and professors. When the lists were out, and the students crowded round, the cry would be—

"No need to look, the curly-headed little doctor is sure to be at the top. Yes, there he is again!"

"They laughed at me," he said, "but I did not care for that. It was a case of 'Let those laugh who win!'"

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

In 1863-4 he took the silver medal in Physiology ; and in 1865, when he was barely twenty-one; he graduated as L.R.C.P. and L.M., and took the gold medal for Medical Jurisprudence.<sup>1</sup>

And now he thought that he might venture on a call at the Manse of Arbroath. How often that visit had been lived through in anticipation, as the years had passed slowly by ! But “all things come round to him that will but wait,” and now he was really going. He was there. And, rude anticlimax ! he found himself absolutely forgotten. After a while, however, the old farm days, the gatherings for daily prayer, and the singing boy, all came back to mind ; and from that time forward the young medical graduate saw to it that he should not be forgotten again. On July 2nd, 1869, the vision of his boyhood, the inspiration of his youth, became his wife, and his lifelong joy.

Meanwhile, he went into private practice,

<sup>1</sup> His F.R.C.S. he took seven years later.

## Medical Missionary.

first in Broxburn, and then in Lasswade. He made his way—as such a man was bound to do—there, as everywhere; and, in Lasswade especially, he felt that he was liked and sought after, and that his way was clear to some of the best and most aristocratic practice of the district. It was now, while arrangements were in progress for a lucrative partnership with a fashionable physician, that the question arose in his heart:

“Shall I remain here, or shall I become a medical missionary?”

To understand the influences at work, we must go back to the time of his birth. His mother, in dedicating him to God, had dedicated him to His service as a missionary, should He so will; and this double dedication was thereafter kept before his mind, while personal interest in the mission cause was stirred up, as occasion served, by incidents of missionary enterprise, and by missionary biography. “My mother,” he wrote in later life, “had, under God, not a little to

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

do with the missionary bent." Then, soon after his conversion, and during the impressionable years of young manhood, he had been exposed to the influences of his uncle, W. Burns Thomson, that remarkable man to whom so many others owe their first impulse in the direction of medical mission service.

But all this made the struggle no less. Professional instincts, natural ambitions and affections, were all in array against the still small voice that suggested the mission-field as a scope for his energies. It was a terrible battle, and he could hardly bear to speak of it afterwards. But one day, at the Communion table at Mr. Arnot's Church, Edinburgh, the choice was made. Worldly prospects, as an object for work, were solemnly renounced, and he lifted his eyes from the muckrake to the crown of Him who turns many to righteousness. It was a choice in which he never wavered, which he never regretted; his chosen work became to him

## Medical Missionary.

the very joy and delight of his heart ; and God added thereto professional repute, food convenient, and honour such as falls to the lot of few of His missionary servants.

W. Thomson Crabbe,

### III.

#### ABERDEEN.

“ The weak and the gentle, the ribald and rude,  
He took as he found them, and did them all good ;  
It always was so with him.”

ABOUT the time that Dr. Thomson Crabbe came to the parting of the ways, and freely chose the joys and sorrows of the medical missionary as his portion, another decision which was materially to affect his life's work was arrived at by some of the Christian workers of Aberdeen, and notably by Mr. John Gordon, of Park Hill.

The Aberdeen Evangelistic Association had, previous to this date, been formed for the raising of the degraded and the helping of the sick and sorrowful of the town. But there were degraded ones who would not be

## Medical Missionary.

touched ; there were sick and sorrowful ones who, by existing agencies, could not be raised. Some new agency must be found which would reach all these ; and Mr. Gordon decided that that agency must take the form of a medical mission like those already existing in Edinburgh, Liverpool and Glasgow.

By faith, then, without knowing who would be the medical missionary agent, he secured a dispensary and two years' salary and expenses ; and then, being in Edinburgh in 1868 for the General Assembly, he and Mrs. Gordon called on Dr. Burns Thomson at the Medical Mission House to ask advice about the project.

How well Mrs. Gordon still remembers the cordial reception at that wonderful oasis in the wilderness of the Cowgate, and the interest of exploring every part of the quaint old premises ; but above all, the delight of finding that Dr. Burns Thomson's own nephew, Dr. W. Thomson Crabbe, was ready and longing to begin the double work of preaching and healing.

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

And so it came to pass that, when all else was ready, the Lord, in answer to prayer, sent the man. Mr. and Mrs. Gordon met Dr. Crabbe on their way north, by appointment, at the Perth bookstall; and the favourable impression made by him then upon their minds was never weakened, but grew ever deeper as time went on. "God had prepared him for a work prepared."

Dr. Crabbe began his Aberdeen work in the autumn, at the age of twenty-five; and, young as he was, he at once attracted, like a magnet, the very cases the Evangelistic Association had failed effectually to touch. He gathered the rough boys and girls of the city—that factory class which so few can reach and influence—into a Sunday School; and with him they were perfectly amenable, his natural power over them being increased by a way he had of using his spectacles as a mirror, which encouraged the awe-inspiring belief that he had eyes at the back of his

## Medical Missionary.

head. He had Sunday meetings, too, for the adults, and out of seven hundred who attended no place of worship, and who in one year passed through the Aberdeen dispensary, three hundred were induced to attend these Mission Services; and several of them joined Churches.

Many clerical brethren wondered at the doctor's audiences, and envied him his work. The opium eater found Christ at the Medical Mission, and abandoned the opium habit; the beggar turned there to Him who regardeth "the prayer of the poor destitute," and was clothed in the garments of salvation; the dying came to the Mission, drank in the Gospel, went home to speak of the Man who receiveth sinners, and were gone before they could hear of Him again; the sorrowful came there, and said, "It is to us a green spot in this vale of tears"; the freethinker learned there to say of Him whom once he despised, "My Lord and my God"; the drunken and the abandoned found their way to the doctor and were tenderly and faithfully cared for.

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

No wonder that the love of the poor of the city for "*our* doctor" was boundless.

But now the elder brother spirit of the good people of Aberdeen woke up. "You are encouraging sin by attending such bad cases as you do," said they to Dr. Crabbe. "I think not," he replied. "To be otherwise than kind to such is the surest way to frustrate the end we have in view. Let us rather pity them."

It is hard to keep from giving some of his Aberdeen cases in detail, so touchingly beautiful are they. Just one, perhaps, may be told:—An old man nearly seventy years of age, dead in trespasses and sins, came to the Mission for a bad hand. For long the doctor dressed it, dropping in meanwhile, by turns, a kindly word and a word from the Bible. One day he was surprised to find drops of water splashing down on his own hand and on the hand he was dressing. Looking up to find the cause, he saw the big old man in a flood of tears. "Ah! doctor,"

## Medical Missionary.

said he, "I've found the Saviour to-day." And a consistent life thereafter proved that the words were true.

After the Aberdeen work had fairly begun, scarcely a week passed without tokens of blessing. "It is worth all the disagreeables connected with the work," said a student once, "and all the world can bestow, to be the means of so much blessing to an immortal soul."

The medical students of the Aberdeen University got a good deal of medical and of mission training from Dr. Crabbe during the last five of his six years in the city. They had a large field for observation and practical work both in and out of the dispensary, and had a very excellent teacher. It is noteworthy that the doctor did not lose one out of 375 midwifery cases that he undertook in Aberdeen, although in some of them there was everything against recovery.

Can it be believed that such a work as this would fail for lack of material support? Yet so it was. Well might Mrs. Gordon write in

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

an impassioned appeal published somewhere about this period :—

“ No gold ! no gold ! . . .  
There are sick in the city, we hear them moan,  
Soul and body are sad and lone,  
A Double Healer we pine to give,  
But the Healer needeth him gold to live.”

“ And for the claims, also, of his work,” she might have added.

But Home Medical Missions were then in their infancy, and the Lord's stewards of Aberdeen seem scarcely, as yet, to have been awake to their responsibilities and privileges in this direction. And so it came to pass that one day in the autumn of 1874 Dr. Crabbe turned his face southwards; and found himself with his wife and two little sons settled temporarily in Edinburgh. Here his uncle, Dr. Burns Thomson, was rapidly breaking down under the burden and heat of his long day of labour; and was thankful for the help of the young strong hands set free to relieve the strain. Dr. Burns Thomson's work now lay in the Canongate.

# Medical Missionary.

## IV.

### EDINBURGH TO BIRMINGHAM.

“Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.”  
—Ps. cvii. 43.

DR. CRABBE was not to stay more than eighteen months in Edinburgh. God had, for long past, been preparing other things for him.

The prospect of having to close the Aberdeen Medical Mission had been for some time looming before Mr. Gordon's mind when, on September 29th, 1873, he wrote to a well-known Christian lady in Birmingham, urging on her the claims and value of medical missions, and adding :—

“I know a young medical man, an excellent

W. Thomson Crabbe,

evangelist, who is willing to take up that sort of work ; and if you thought that the means could be obtained in Birmingham to carry it on, I might be able to find you the agent. If you thought well of this, I could put you in direct communication with my friend, who, in the meantime, does not know that I am writing to you."

And again, October 16th:—"While desiring to thank you for your kind wish to see the young medical friend I spoke of by asking him to spend a night at your house, you will see that this is not practicable when I tell you that he is now settled and at work in this neighbourhood, distant about 400 miles from Birmingham. . . . Be ready to say, 'All that is needed for this work is found, Lord, wilt Thou send the man?' and I will then give you the means of judging whether the man I have written about is the Master's man or not."

These letters stirred up the fire of prayer and interest in the idea of a Birmingham

## Medical Missionary.

Medical Mission, which had been now burning, now smouldering, since the beginning of August, 1870. There had been, ever since that date, a weekly Saturday prayer meeting at the house of one of the clergymen of the town for the express purpose of pleading with God to awaken hearts to an interest in the matter; and a band of those who were pledged to give the Lord no rest until it should become a reality, had been quietly working as well as praying for its accomplishment.

Things began now to move on. A leaflet was written on the subject for general circulation; money began to come in, and in February, 1874, Dr. Burns Thomson came and held meetings in the town. In May, 1874, a Medical Mission Committee was formed of some of the leading doctors, ministers, and business men of the place, and February 15th, 1875, saw a tentative mission dispensary opened in Park Street by one of that Committee, Dr. F. Maberly,

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

pending the consolidation of the work on a better and more permanent basis.

At the beginning of 1876, however, the Park Street premises were pulled down, and the Medical Mission dispensary was left without a home. But the Committee were now wide awake and in dead earnest, Dr. Maberly's venture having proved beyond doubt the value of the Medical Mission agency. Something definite must be done. New premises must be found, and a man who could give his whole time to the work.

During all this time of unsettlement, Dr. Crabbe was, as we know, quietly busy in Edinburgh. Twice the Committee had appealed to him for help, but twice they had been refused. The doctor had not seen his way to leave his uncle at a time of need, even though the exigencies of his work obliged him to live with his family close to the Canongate dispensary and small mission hospital, an arrangement which he

## Medical Missionary.

felt to be most insalubrious for his young children.

Then, again, the Lord had greatly blessed his work in Edinburgh. Dry bones had been stirred there, and one after another had come into the consulting room with, "The address seemed all for me to-day." The Sunday services, too, had just the kind of congregation that Christ would have loved. No bonnets were allowed there, only mutches, lest those who would have come there might be kept back; for Dr. Crabbe had not come to the Canongate, any more than he had gone to Aberdeen, to call the righteous, the respectable, but sinners to<sup>r</sup>epentance. "Ye mustna be braw," he would warn anyone who spoke of coming on the Sunday.

"What is the reason of all the blessing on the Edinburgh work?" asked an interested visitor one day of the missionary students who were training under Dr. Crabbe's care and "learning more from him than from any other lecturer."

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

“The doctor,” said they, “prays for souls, and would not be satisfied to work on without an answer to his prayers. He *expects* success, and he gets it. . . . Not one of our ministers in Edinburgh, and we have many striking preachers, could give such an address as Dr. Crabbe to such a congregation. He knows the way straight to their hearts.”

But, early in 1876, just when the Birmingham needs became most pressing, God was stirring up the eagle’s nest in Edinburgh. The fight with the devil and all his works had been that winter a very hand to hand one. Satan seemed to be contesting every inch of ground with “The Master’s man.” “Why not accept the offer?” the doctor said one day, to a lad at the dispensary, who was under conviction. “The devil,” he replied, “has such a haud ower me.” And how many there might have said the same!

And, just now, though others did not see

## Medical Missionary.

it, Dr. Crabbe felt as if something were hindering the full flow of spiritual blessing on the work. "It may be an indication," said he, "that the Lord means me to leave Edinburgh, for I cannot stay unless I get souls to my hire. He has given me them up to this time, and without them I cannot work on. Oh, no, I cannot."

Such was the cry throughout February from the doctor. He wrestled, agonised, for souls, and was downright unhappy about the lack of "showers of blessing." Drops he cared comparatively little for. They were refreshing, but not satisfying. Does anyone think he was wrong? We might learn something from such divine discontent.

The doctor's family, too, and he himself, were suffering physically from their long sojourn in the Canongate; and when, early in March, a third invitation reached him from the Birmingham Committee to take charge of their embryo Medical Mission, he

W. Thomson Crabbe,

recognised in it the voice of God, and said, "Thy servant heareth." And, as soon as matters could be arranged in Edinburgh, he left.

## Medical Missionary.

### V.

#### THE YEAR OF GRACE.

"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

NEVER during his twenty-three years in Birmingham had Dr. Thomson Crabbe or his Medical Mission Committee there any cause to regret the decision of March, 1876, for never did a cloud rest on their happy relations. The Committee, recognising at once the strong character, definite views, and clear judgment of their agent, not only left him wholly unfettered, but helped him forward with all the weight of their influence. "My Committee," he would laughingly say, "provides all the necessary funds, and gives advice if asked. That's nice now, isn't it? That's as things *should* be." And some of

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

those who were on that Committee at first remained with him to the end. A strong personal friendship very soon bound them and their agent together.

It was the same with Dr. Crabbe's Mission workers. Once associated with him in service they never cared to leave him. "Everything at the Mission seems to be begun, continued, and ended in love," was said one day. And love, though a silken bond, is the hardest to break.

The doctor went to see his Aberdeen friends after closing up his work in Edinburgh, and, as he was leaving for Birmingham, a friend gave him Ruth ii. 12. The same text, printed in old English by a friend, greeted him on arrival, and he was delighted.

"It seemed," he wrote, "as if the wing of the God of Israel was about His pilgrim from the one place to the other. And truly it has been so, for all along we have had such comfort in journeying, and have

## Medical Missionary.

fallen amongst so many of the Lord's loving people, that we are quite cheered and thankful."

That text was kept on the consulting room table till it was quite dirty and old.

The Medical Mission, now in Barn Street, Fazeley Street, was fully opened September 17th, 1876. Dr. Maberly had kindly been doing what he could there for the previous two months. Sixty-five were there the first day. On the 1st December, Dr. Thomson Crabbe wrote, "The work is being blest, the Lord owning the word preached and the work done in His name for the in-gathering of souls. The Sunday service . . . could be twice filled, were the hall large enough, with those for whom our hearts yearn. It grieves me to know that they go away after coming to the Mission. But the Lord will provide a new place in His own time and way."

So he was already thinking of extension. And the Lord gave him all, and much

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

more than all that he could then have contemplated.

From August, 1870, till the time Dr. Crabbe began his work in Birmingham, there had been exactly six years of steady, earnest, organised prayer about the Mission, and now came the reaping time from all this sowing. "Seven has always been the number of blessing," the doctor used often to say in that first year.

How happy he was! The Lord had brought him forth by the right way, and he had come to a city of habitation. He was in his right niche, and the Lord was giving him, literally, daily seals to his ministry. The late-longed-for showers had come. "Don't go to the Medical Mission, or you will get converted," was very soon heard amongst the poor of the neighbourhood. "I am quite struck with the place," said a poor woman who came there. "It is so like what I read in my Bible of how Jesus did; He cared for soul and body." "As one of themselves,"

## Medical Missionary.

said a working man, "I know what the poor think and feel; and this is the very way of getting us to look at Christianity, when we are made to feel its fruits." A patient lent his prescription one day to a friend of his to be made up by an ordinary chemist. The medicine did no good, which was not, perhaps, to be wondered at; but the explanation arrived at amongst those concerned was that "it was not mixed with faith," *i.e.*, not prayed over by the doctor.

"You've made it so simple, sir," was the testimony of another to the doctor's Gospel message, "that I don't see my way *not* to be saved"; while a man who had resisted the influence of one of "the two praying Willies" of Lucknow, and who had walked away twice from the Birmingham Medical Mission without coming in, because of its religious character, returned there to yield himself to "Willie's" Saviour.

When the report of this "Year of Grace" came out, it seemed, as it seems still, about

W. Thomson Crabbe,

the most marvellous story of Medical Mission work ever published. And yet, to those who had followed the doctor's work closely, it was disappointing. The half, they felt, had not been told.

# Medical Missionary.

## VI.

### CONSULTING ROOM WORK.

“ So stood of old the Holy Chris<sup>t</sup>  
Amidst the suffering throng  
With whom His lightest touch sufficed  
To make the weakest strong.

“ That healing gift He lends to them  
Who use it in His name—  
The power that filled His garment's hem  
Is evermore the same.”

It was a rare privilege to be admitted behind the scenes, and to see Dr. Crabbe in his consulting room. Here is his portrait by one who evidently visited him there, and who afterwards wrote his impressions of the “Man of Thrums” to a Birmingham daily paper:—

“A typical Scotsman of middle stature, with a face that might look up from a weaver's stool or down from a Scot's pulpit;

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

eyes that peer brightly under bushy brows, and lips that curl with quiet humour or take a fitting seriousness from the Pauline Epistles. . . . He gives advice, good for body and soul alike, in sound, simple, homespun English that no one can mistake the drift of. Year in, year out, he sits in his sanctum at the Birmingham Medical Mission, listening to all manner of tales of trouble of body and soul, and ministering to men, women, and children, with a kindly sympathy that never fails to comfort."

The doctor's consulting room qualifications were very remarkable. Whilst questioning patients about their physical and spiritual condition and listening to their answers, he could write down their whole history as rapidly as possible—writing and talking going on without distraction, by a sort of double-movement action.

And his talk at these times! One always longed for a shorthand reporter. The parables by the Sea of Tiberias were brought

## Medical Missionary.

to mind as he spoke, and one did not wonder that the common people heard him gladly as he deftly pointed the highest spiritual truths with illustrations from their everyday life. But, after all, no shorthand reporter could have reproduced the loving intonation of the doctor's voice as he sought to meet the individual needs of his patients. That rich and varied voice, tuned by the Spirit of God, won a way for the Lord he loved more perhaps than any words that he said. Its inflexions and vibrations—now tender, now faithful and pleading—crept in and out of sad and hardened hearts; and the message was remembered by reason of the music to which it was set.

And a shorthand reporter could as little have caught the doctor's comic seriousness or sunny mirthfulness when he saw that a little teasing was good for his patients. A man comes in, sixty-seven years old. Dr. C.: "Well, sit down. What's the matter?" Man: "Very bad in the chest, sir." Stetho-

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

scope, of course, comes into play. Dr. C.: "Do you go to church?" "Been so bad, sir." Dr. C., gravely: "Well, we have two perambulators, and so we can fetch you to our service here on Sunday evenings. That'll be nice now, won't it?" Man: "Oh, sir, I shouldn't wish that. I'll come on Sunday evenings, sir, regular." Anyone who knew the doctor can imagine his encouraging "That's nice, now! You're *sure* you won't want the perambulator? It's all ready, mind!" and the mischievous light in his eyes as he rings the bell for another patient. Smiles and tears, quaint humour and pathetic touches were never far apart with Dr. Crabbe. They were warp and woof of his whole nature.

He was extremely business-like withal, having the right word and making the right diagnosis straight away: and, once his work was begun, he went through it without the waste of a moment. Yet no one would have the feeling of having been hurried. The

## Medical Missionary.

kindness and aptness of the words spoken made up for the brevity of the interview.

Other consulting-room qualifications were his remarkable memory and his power of recalling faces. "I remember patients whom I have not seen for ten years," he said one day; "and I not only remember the name and face directly they come in, but also the subject of our last conversation. I can take up the thread where we dropped it, and find out whether they have gone on or gone back spiritually. I can remember just where they were." He could tell also the names of the courts, and the numbers of the houses, where he had visited his patients of long ago.

And they remembered him. It was touching to see how mere infants would keep him in mind. "You will not remember my son," said a poor woman, "but he remembers you. You gave us a piece of meat and a plum-pudding ten years ago, and he was with me, a little one of three years; and you gave him a bit of holly to stick in the pudding on

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

Christmas-day. That he did ; and the remembrance of it is green and fresh to him to this day." And another : " You won't remember, but my grandchild came with me when he was about five years old to sign the pledge, and you put your hand on his head, and spoke to him about his soul, and told him to keep the pledge truthfully, and you mentioned about coming to see you in ten years time. He did not forget, for he was telling me the other day it was near time now to go back to the doctor to tell him how we had been doing."

We had, just now, a pen-and-ink portrait of the doctor, from the hand of one of his many Mission visitors. We are sure that the record in the following chapter of an hour spent with him in the midst of his work, from another friend, who was privileged to see him in the late winter of 1896, cannot fail to prove of interest.

## Medical Missionary.

### VII.

#### TWO HOURS WITH THE DOCTOR.<sup>1</sup>

I WAS in Birmingham for one night only ; but to leave without seeing Dr. Thomson Crabbe and the Medical Mission was not to be thought of. It could easily be done by taking the slow train to London instead of the 11.10 which had been arranged for. And so it was settled. I knew Floodgate Street of old, so should have no difficulty in finding my way there.

At eleven o'clock, accordingly, I was at the door of the Medical Mission. "Have you your check?" "No, but I have a welcome waiting me from Dr. Crabbe," and the bright look that greeted the reply

<sup>1</sup> Extracted from "Two Hours at the Birmingham Medical Mission."—*Medical Missions at Home and Abroad.*

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

proved that it was more than passport sufficient.

In a few minutes the doctor came in to find a visitor in the act of altering his daily calendar. But his sight is short, and the consulting-room is large, and it was not until he was half across it that his cheery words proved that the visitor had not miscalculated the "welcome."

"Where did you come from? They didn't tell me you were here. Now, this is nice; this is like old times."

The hour for the opening meeting was overdue, so there was no time for talk, and we went almost straight into the waiting-room, where about 110 patients were assembled. "There are not many to-day," explained the doctor afterwards, "because I have had so bad a cold that they hardly knew whether to expect me, and no new cases were taken in." Query—What number constitutes "many" at the Birmingham Medical Mission?

## Medical Missionary.

Two verses of “There is a fountain,” with the chorus, “I do believe,” a few words of prayer, and the doctor’s address completed a service which, for brevity and earnestness, and for adaptation to the circumstances of the hearers, could scarcely be surpassed.

“I am going,” said the doctor, “to tell you something that God has written for us in the letter to the Ephesians, first chapter, seventh verse. It was written first for the Ephesians, but it is for us too—for us, mind you, who are in Jesus. It tells of something that we have got. I say ‘we,’ but the ‘we’ only means those who are trusting in Jesus. You’ll remember that. And what is this great gift which God tells us we have? The verse says, ‘In whom’—that means in Jesus—‘we have redemption by His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins.’ ‘Redemption’ and ‘forgiveness.’ We have that. Isn’t that grand? Shouldn’t that make you glad to-day, if you have taken the fact in? It is

W. Thomson Crabbe,

‘in Jesus,’ through Jesus, that we have these blessings. We did nothing to get them. He did it all for us. Isn’t it nice, now? We had a good try at getting them before we trusted to Him to give them, but it was all no good. He did it all. It is ‘through His blood,’ through His death, that redemption and forgiveness became ours. It wasn’t because we were nice people that He died for us. Not at all. It wasn’t because we had contrived to make ourselves better. Certainly not. It never says in His Word that Jesus saves the people who have managed to make themselves better, but I will tell you what it does say: ‘While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.’ And why did He die to save sinners? I will tell you. Because He liked to do it.

“Isn’t that good news for those of you here who feel that you are sinners? Isn’t it good news for those who are still far off, as well as for us who have been redeemed and whose sins have been forgiven? Redemption

## Medical Missionary.

means being purchased, being bought back from Satan and from sin. Isn't there any poor sinner here to-day who would like to take this blessing ?

“ Rejoice, you who have been purchased by Jesus, that such a dear Saviour is yours. And rejoice, you who as yet know Him not, that redemption and forgiveness are offered to you, and to you just because you are sinners.”

And now the doctor made his way to the consulting room, and one by one “ the people followed him, and he received them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and healed (or sought to heal) such as had need of healing.” It is Dr. Crabbe's unfailing gentleness no less than his medical and surgical skill that wins the confidence of all, while his apt but quaint illustrations and phraseology and the vein of humour that runs through the whole man are very charming.

“ I never mind making a man laugh,” I

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

once heard Spurgeon say, "for I know if I can make him laugh I shall be able also to get at the fountain of his tears."

"I could never have done the work that I have had to do," said Ellice Hopkins to me once, "had it not been for my sense of the ludicrous. The work itself has been of so crushing a nature that, but for the power of seeing the funny side of things and of laughing, I should sometimes have been utterly overwhelmed ; I could not have borne it."

The first case in the consulting room is a woman asking for a death certificate. "Her son died last night. The end was very rapid ; he melted like butter before the sun," the doctor tells us in a grave aside. And after making out the required paper, he lovingly and faithfully urges home on the mother the lesson God is seeking to teach the stricken household. There was at least hope that the son himself had received the message brought by the doctor to his

## Medical Missionary.

dying bed, and "that he was resting in Jesus."

Now came requests for outdoor visits. "That man whom I am asked to go to see," says the doctor as one woman goes out, "was a surgeon in the army. He was in a splendid position—splendid!" "And what brought him down?" "Just misfortune."

An elderly woman comes in, weeping bitterly the whole time. And well she may, for her leg is in a frightful condition. "You ought not to be standing about. If you will promise me to lie up, I will come to see you." "I don't like to trouble you, doctor." "It's in the district, and no trouble. And now, did you hear that nice text to-day?" "Yes, and I do wish, doctor, that some one could come to read to me." "Well, yes, we may be able to manage that; but don't forget that it is Jesus you really want. If you have Him, He'll put all right for you."

Most who come in are reminded by the

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

doctor of the subject of the address. The next case ("Poor, tottering wife!" ejaculated the doctor) "hopes Jesus is her Saviour." "Yes, and why?" "Well, sir, I try." "Ah! but He's done it all. Remember that." "I wish I was in heaven," sighs the poor old body. "Well, when you get there you'll be all right," and with this reassuring word she too takes her leave.

"You know the dear Saviour," Dr. Crabbe says as the next patient is leaving; and the radiant smile which lights up the whole face, and the hearty "Oh yes, sir, I do," leaves one in no doubt that to her at least Christ is "precious."

Dr. Crabbe seems to get a good many men. They like him. He puts his hand on their shoulders and calls them by their Christian names, winning by love those with whom others can do little. But they get manly downrightness as well as womanly gentleness from him.

"To whom was that letter addressed of

## Medical Missionary.

which I was speaking to-day ? ” he asks one of his men. “ Was it to you ? ” “ I suppose it was. ” “ No, it wasn’t ; it was addressed ‘ to them that are in Christ Jesus. ’ But it may be yours. ” “ Did you hear, ” another is asked, “ what I read to-day ? ” “ Yes. I can’t read or write myself, but I could hear you. I was listening all the time. ” “ Well, and what do you think ? ” “ I shouldn’t mind if I were to die to-night ; I should go to heaven all right. ” “ No, you wouldn’t. You haven’t accepted Christ. ” “ I haven’t done any harm to anybody. ” “ Yes, you have. You’ve said bad words to your wife. You know you have. ” Evidently the man thought there was “ no harm ” in that, and he sturdily, almost defiantly, stuck to his position. “ How came you in prison, then ? ” is the final thrust. “ Is it right to strike people ? ” “ Well—perhaps not, but she deserved it. ” But he softens down a little, and is invited to the Sunday evening service for further enlightenment.

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

“Just out of prison, and has never done anything wrong in his life,” soliloquises Dr. Crabbe as the man goes out; and I understand now the poor fellow’s attempt, promptly suppressed by the doctor, to cover up his closely-cropped head with a hat as he came in.

Another man, of the same type, comes into the consulting room, but of him the doctor is able to say, “I think he is on the road to heaven now.” And so the morning through, as on an April day, sunlight follows shade at the Birmingham Medical Mission, or the clouds return after the rain.

Many cases go away cheered with the assurance that they or their babies “are better.” One little be-spectacled lad goes away radiant after a heavy dose of chaffing. “It does him good,” says the mother, “only to see the doctor. It seems to make him well, it does.” Others, nervous patients especially, get their share, too, of the chaffing.

“Now then, you’re going to have a plaster

## Medical Missionary.

to put on your side. Don't put the paper next your skin, mind, or the plaster'll do you no good." "How am I to take my medicine, doctor?" The directions are given. "And in the night?" "Oh, you needn't sit up all night to take your physic. Don't take it instead of sleeping." "Is water good for me, doctor?" "Oh, yes, water's very good. Don't drink a bucketful. You'll mind that. *A bucketful* would do you harm."

The doctor's sympathy, from his long going in and out among the poor, is a peculiarly understanding one. "Where do you go on Sunday?" "I come here, sir, when I go anywhere, but it's not often I get out. There's the children, you see." "Where's your husband? I would keep him in to look after the children." "He's asleep, sir, in the evening. He has to go off to nightwork."

The doctor urges the over-worn mother no more, but turns to his visitor with a quiet—

"These poor people have a lot of difficulties."

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

One woman comes in looking quite bright. "My husband's got work." "That's nice! And what are you going to give him when he comes home?" A hesitating "I've nothing, sir." "Oh, but you must have something in the house to give him after his day's work, just to put a little heart in him, you know. There! take that, and he'll wonder what raven has brought him and you a meal."

"It was sixpence," the doctor explained, "just to buy them a loaf of bread, poor things. And she'll get a little lard, too, out of it most likely. That's what they generally like to get to their bread—if they can—a little lard."

The advent of a gentleman who wanted to speak with Dr. Crabbe alone made now a good break in the consulting room experiences; for, interested as I was in these, I did want once more to go over the whole of the premises. . . .

# Medical Missionary.

## VIII.

### RELATION TO THE CHURCHES.

"I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

"I believe in the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen."

AFTER the consulting-room work and the addresses on dispensary days, the doctor's Sunday services were the very backbone of the Mission. They were a great enjoyment both to preacher and hearers.

"You are surely not going to the doctor's meeting to-night in that rain?" said a wife to her husband, who was making ready to leave home while the rain poured in torrents. "Not go to the meeting?" said he. "Why! it's the very happiest hour I spend all the

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

week, and do you think a drop of rain would keep me away?" There he was, in a full meeting, from a distance of nearly two miles, as wet as water could make him, but with a face full of expectancy and peace.

The texts chosen by Dr. Crabbe for all his addresses were short and striking. And he drove them in well, so that they often proved in after years to have been nails fastened in a sure place. Even the little ones remembered them.

As in Aberdeen, the doctor encouraged those especially to come to these services who would find scant welcome at some of our fashionable churches. How hearty his welcome would be of the poor creature who was willing to come again if he "would let one in rags in." "*You* must not come," he told a tidy woman one day; "your bonnet is too good." "Then I will leave my bonnet at home," she promptly replied.

But what was the medical missionary's

## Medical Missionary.

attitude towards the churches of Birmingham? What became of the converts of the Mission? Well, some of them could never be induced to leave their spiritual home, saying, "I'm sure no one could mind our staying where we've been fed." But others who after a while woke up to their responsibilities as members of a community, would come to their medical missionary, and say—

"And what church shall I go to, doctor?"

"Go to the churches round till you find one that is helpful to you, and there settle down," he would reply. And this they did. In one year alone, thirty of these converts joined the churches of the neighbourhoods. Many would go to those with which they had early associations—Wesleyan, Baptist, Church of England, etc. He had only one "don't." It was, "Don't join the Ritualists." Those who had found the substance needed not, he felt, to seek the shadow; while those who are attracted by the shadow may

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

be effectually distracted thereby from the substance itself.

From the first, as may be supposed, the Mission, conducted on these lines, commanded the hearty sympathy of the Evangelical churches of Birmingham.

“The Medical Mission,” said a minister one day, “appears to me like a spiritual hospital where the serious cases betake themselves, and the church the convalescent home; and my experience has been that they come to the convalescent home with splendid appetites.” Dr. Dale felt that Dr. Crabbe’s Mission was in some respects the grandest evangelistic work carried on in Birmingham. The late Bishop of Worcester sent a donation for it with an appreciative letter; while the present Bishop has, for many years now, had his name on its Committee.

Dr. Crabbe, though himself a Presbyterian and member of the Midlands Presbytery, never said to his people, “Join the Presby-

## Medical Missionary.

terians.” But, in later years, he started a medical mission in direct connection with the Presbyterian Church at Nechells, which he himself had been the means of raising. It was under the same roof indeed. Here the minister and the doctor were co-evangelists, taking turns to preach. Many converts from the Nechells Medical Mission joined the Nechells Church. It was a most interesting experiment.

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

### IX.

#### EXTENSION.

“O that I were an orange-tree,  
That busy plant!  
Then I should ever laden be,  
And never want  
Some fruit for him that dressed me.”

*Herbert.*

WE saw how, within a few weeks of arrival in Birmingham, Dr. Crabbe was crying out for more room. Within eight months he writes: “We have about settled upon a piece of land in River Street and Floodgate Street—the corner containing 540 square yards. We are to have a meeting in the Mission of the Secretary, Mr. Goodall, Mr. E. R. Lloyd and myself to look the place over, and take a builder and have his

## Medical Missionary.

judgment on the matter. So you see we have a beginning now."

Then comes news of the Building Fund; and early in 1878 he writes: "Our hands are full of so many kinds of work—what with preaching, teaching, healing, selling, and talking, we have little time to ourselves, not even so much time as to look at what people are saying of the work."

Later on in the year he says, "The work here is still interesting and blessed. Every day some are roused to a sense of their need and some comforted. The place is crowded week-days and Sundays with patients, classes, school, and meeting. How much cause for thanksgiving we have that the Lord is pleased to own our efforts in His service. The new building is progressing, and we hope to see it finished in about two months."

And on March 3rd, 1879: "Well! we hoped to have seen you on an occasion which marks an era in the history of the

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

Birmingham Medical Mission. You know it has had its eras, or turning points, and this is one which, to you at least, ought to be esteemed of importance, as it gives to the Mission a local habitation and a name. On Friday the new hall and premises were opened, and opened with such *éclat* that few of the dwellers in this lower region ever saw such a number of the *grandees* visit a place in this district as were seen on that occasion. The street was lined both sides with carriages, cabs, and people, waiting till the opening service was over. One woman told me to-day that she was in the crowd, and they were saying that ‘the gentlefolks seem to think as much of our doctor as we do ourselves.’ The hall inside was crowded too, and the interest manifested by all present was very marked, and the speeches were very nice. As for myself, I felt quite overcome, and I could scarcely find my tongue to express the pent-up feelings of gratitude which welled up in my heart

## Medical Missionary.

toward the Lord for His great goodness towards us in providing so amply for our wants. . . .

“But you must come and see the new place for yourself. . . . On the opening day I saw a card dated March 4th, 1877, written with reference to this building, when there was faint prospect of its early realization: ‘The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.’ It was interesting to see the card as showing the faithfulness of our God.”

“The evening meeting on Sunday was a glorious gathering. The hall was crammed, the people standing, and many going away. The place, they say, is already too small to contain all the blessing the Lord is giving to us. Our text was, ‘O Lord, send now prosperity.’ One person came forward and said: ‘This night, I am glad to be able to say, I have given myself to Jesus to be His to save me.’ There was a marked impression on the large assembly, for we had there

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

nearly 400. To-day I was able to see 120 cases, and the blessing continues."

No sooner had the doctor got into these new premises than he began to plan for branches. And, during the twenty-two years in Birmingham, he started several in different parts of the town, which existed for varying periods. One in Ellis Street, Holloway Road, is still extant. Of the one started at Nechells mention has already been made.

But it was not all work and no play with the "curly-headed doctor." His talk and his letters sparkled with humour, and all his friends, like his patients, had their fair share of teasing. And, like a true Scot, he got away every summer for a good holiday, and was lazy for awhile, indulging a thoroughly boyish "dread of (letters) and love of fun."

"Pray do not estimate our regard by the frequency of our communications," he writes in one of the early years of the Mission from Pitlochry: "You must understand that we

## Medical Missionary.

have got selfish here, or rather, in love with the hills amongst which we have been roaming since we came, so that little time, and, when tired, less inclination, remains for letter writing. Accept of my thanks for your long letter containing suggestions about the everlasting Report. We will have to do something to it on our return. Or, might it not be sent here and some change be made upon it on the rainy days? Hitherto we have gathered together around the 'Scottish Naturalist,' at whose eccentricity we have had frequent opportunities of laughing till our sides were sore. I am the delighted reader and translator of the Scotch. . . . Yesterday Mr. G., Mr. W., and I walked over the hills to Glen Shee. Then, turning westward through another glen, we roamed over many hills, and reached the *snow*, which we found nice to eat, to walk on, and to throw in the form of snowballs. You should have seen Mr. W. and myself snowballing poor Mr. G., who had started down the hill. Tired and hungry, though

W. Thomson Crabbe,

we had something with us, we reached Enoch dhu about six, after wandering from half-past ten."

How indignant the doctor was on occasion of one of these journeys to Scotland to be told by a landlord that porridge was only made now for the stable boys. "Then we'll all be stable boys!" he exclaimed.

The year of the opening of the Floodgate Mission premises saw the doctor's summer holiday thrown out of gear by the arrival of another little son, who was most lovingly and heartily welcomed. His advent was announced and his personality described in a most characteristic letter, which told also of the starting of cottage meetings in connection with the Mission.

These cottage meetings became a great institution. Family prayers are being begun, too, in many homes, the doctor going himself on the first occasion. Shops in the neighbourhood are getting shut up on Sundays. The Mothers' Meeting now numbers a hundred members, and a Temperance Society

## Medical Missionary.

is being arranged for. It became subsequently one of the strongest features of the Mission.

“ You see my hands are full, and my head and heart full, too, planning for more forms of operation for extending the good work, so that the kingdom of Jesus be established in this dark place. Our great want is labourers. Pray the Lord to send labourers to help on, lest our strength fail us.”

And so the years wore away till the first decade of the Birmingham Medical Mission found almost every agency that is good for mind, body, and soul in connection with it; and yet there seemed ever more to follow. The history of that Mission is the history of its first Medical Missionary, so we may just glance at a list of the work it has undertaken :—

In and outdoor consultations and nurse's visits; dispensary addresses; evangelistic and children's services; classes for mutual study of the Bible; boys' and girls' Bible band; Gospel Temperance work; Band of Hope;

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

cottage meetings and family prayer ; workers' prayer meetings ; men's, women's, young women's, lads', and infants' classes ; Sunday school ; sick and dividend society ; penny savings bank ; blanket club ; stores depôt ; musical practice for choir ; services of song ; reading and writing classes and physiological lectures ; library and tract distribution ; flower missions ; country trips, and tea parties. "Nothing important can be inaugurated or commemorated without a cup of tea," wrote the doctor once. And the Flower Mission was one of his special delights.

Mission work of various kinds was helped forward here, too. Theophilus Waldemeir said in 1885-6 that the medical portion of his work was carried on on lines suggested by the Birmingham Medical Mission, while the Word of God ran from Floodgate Street to all the ends of the earth. The patients, who came themselves from an all-round radius of fifteen miles, seemed to delight in passing the Mission messages further on.

# Medical Missionary.

## X.

### LAST YEARS AND DAYS.

"I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. . . . Now I go where I shall live by sight and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself. . . .

"And after he had said, 'Take me, for I come unto Thee,' he ceased to be seen of them."

No wonder that Dr. Crabbe was often kept down at the Mission till ten o'clock, and small wonder that in 1888-9 he had a serious two months' illness. From this time he wrote his own report no more. He simply hated writing for the press, and was comparatively conventional, as a rule, on a platform; though he was the most popular speaker at the Town Hall tea for the aged poor, and was the most charming of fireside

W. Thomson Crabbe,

story-books. On one occasion a violent snowstorm set in at the time appointed for a drawing-room meeting; and the following account of the evening was given later to a friend:—

“ I struggled there somehow, and found, as I expected, no one there but myself and my hostess. By-and-by, as we sat talking, the bell rang. The storm had abated a little, and a lady who lived near had ventured out. Nobody else followed, so we sat and had a *tête-à-tête* over the fire. It was very nice, and we quite enjoyed it. I did, and so, I am sure, did she. Presently she said: ‘ Why, this is *exactly* the kind of work for which my husband left money in the Dudley Trust. You must certainly have some of it.’ £500 followed, and another large sum at a later date. Think of that now! All through that nice talk over the fire. God does not need numbers. We three, and the Lord in the midst, made a very successful drawing-room meeting.”

## Medical Missionary.

In 1896, the coming-of-age year of the Mission, the doctor was threatened with a more serious breakdown, and £1,000 was subscribed to send him away for six months of thorough rest and change. This money simply poured in from the many who loved both the work and the worker.

And now followed a delightful time in the Riviera, Constantinople, Egypt, and Palestine, which the doctor's friends will always be deeply thankful they gave him.

But, young as Dr. Crabbe was—little over fifty—his constitution had been undermined, not only by his abundant labours, but by the conditions under which a Medical Missionary in one of our big towns is bound to carry such labours on; and the rest came too late. For two years more of intensely practical sympathetic work he was given back to his beloved Mission, aided now by the like-minded man, Dr. Horace Wilson, whom his illness, in God's good providence, had called

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

into the field. And then, on 12th December, 1898, when down at Floodgate Street, he was seized with violent sickness. With characteristic determination, he finished seeing his patients, and insisted on returning home unattended. But he had made his last entries in the books of the Mission.

Early in January a friend who visited him found him in bed, but radiant. He quite hoped he was over the worst of the illness, though he was not sure; but he had not a care in the world, and was thoroughly enjoying the tender nursing of his wife and sons. The sunshine which flooded the room and his intensely happy spirit seemed a reflection one of the other; and thankful hopefulness filled the home.

But the worst symptoms recurred, and a fortnight later an operation was judged to be essential. It gave great relief, and for a while afterwards he rallied nicely; and then, once again, sank. He ate little, and

## Medical Missionary.

suffered little, but slept much the last few days, and he wasted away so rapidly that the surgeon in attendance, one of the first of his Birmingham friends, would gaze at him, wondering that so slight a tenement was able to contain so grand and loving a soul. On February 13th, just two months from the beginning of the illness, he was "away"—away from the dear ones who were more than life itself to him, away from the streets which were emphatically his own, and where his familiar figure will be missed beyond the power of words to tell, but away with the Lord in whose company he delighted himself, and with the crowd who at the Beautiful Gate had long been watching and waiting for him. Over half a million of times in his thirty years of public ministry had he had opportunity, in private consultations alone, of introducing his Saviour. And who can follow the far-reaching results of such work?

He died as he had lived, ending on the

## W. Thomson Crabbe,

same keynote with which his Christian public life had begun. "Be kind to the poor; do be kind to the poor," was his dying message to a faithful medical mission worker at Floodgate Street; and, when asked what title he most cared for in connection with his name, he said, "Call me a Medical Missionary."

In accordance with his own wish, he rested till the time of the funeral at the scene of his labours in Floodgate Street; and it was reckoned that fifteen thousand must, in those few days, have passed through the consulting room to see the last that they could of him who was to all a beloved physician, and was to many of the number, also, spiritual father, adviser, and friend.

Meanwhile, day by day, services were held in the Hall for children and adults, which were crowded and impressive. God grant, though it be a hard thing to ask, that the earnest pleading of one of the speakers for a double portion of blessing on the work,

## Medical Missionary.

now that the Lord had taken away its head, may be heard and answered.

Saturday, the day of the funeral, will long be remembered. "All the carriages of the place seemed to have been taken, in a great measure, by the poor; and there were forty thousand in the streets," was the impression of those privileged to be present. The service was at Nechells Presbyterian Church, the interment at Witton Cemetery.

The various outgrowths of the Mission are in the hands of its own children, of workers Dr. Thomson Crabbe has trained, of converts who consider that lifelong devotion to its service is no more than its due; while its chief worker, Dr. Horace Wilson, has no higher ambition than this—to follow worthily in the footsteps of its first Medical Missionary, who so closely followed Christ. And it was but a few weeks after the doctor had been taken from earthly to heavenly

## W. Thomson Crabbe.

service when news came that his own eldest son, Dr. John Sandison Crabbe, had been appointed by the Committee as the assistant-physician of the Mission. So we may trustfully and thankfully say—

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

THE END.







